

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4185

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3006

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,ECIN, SY, JO

SUBJ: SYRO-JORDANIAN ECONOMIC AGREEMENT

REF: AMMAN 5234

1. SUMMARY: RECENTLY ANNOUNCED SYRI-JORDANIAN COOPERATION
AGREEMENT THIS PART OF WIDER SYRIAN DIPLOMACY TO IMPROVE AND
COORDINATE RELATIONS WITH JORDAN AND LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM TOLD ME AUGUST 4 THAT "EVERYTHING
WE AGREED UPON IN AMMN HAS BEEN DECLARED TO THE PRESS AND
IMPLEMENTATION OS PROCEEDING SATISFACTORILY." HE UNDERLINED
THE COMPLIMENTARY NATURE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' ECONOMIES AND
MAINTAINED THAT BOTH STOOD TO BENEFIT BY CLOSER COORDINATION.
ECONOMY MINISTER IMADI MADE SIMILAR POINTS TO ME SAME DAY BUT
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ADDED THAT THE JORDANIANS STOOD TO GAIN MORE BY THEIR NEW

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN THE LARGER SYRIAN MARKET. IMADI NOTED THAT WITH THIS AGREEMENT, SYRIA AND JORDAN HAD GONE FURTHER THAN ANY OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES IN MOVING TOWARD THE GOAL OF ECONOMIC UNITY MAPPED OUT BY THE ARAB COMMON MARKET. AS AN ECONOMIST, IMADI BELIEVES THE CLOSER SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP MAKES SENSE AND HE HOPES POLITICS CAN BE KEPT OUT OF IT.

3. JORDANIAN COMMERCIAL ATTACHE IN DAMASCUS TOLD EMBOFF AGUST 2 THAT FIVE MONTHS OF STUDY HAD PRECEDED JULY 31 ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOINT PROJECTS CITED REFTEL. FOREIGN CAPITAL WILL HAVE A LARGER ROLE TO PLAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME, HE SAID, AND AMERICAN INVESTMENT AND BIDS WILL BE WELCOME. THE JORDANIAN THINKS THAT PUBLICATION OF BOTH COUNTRIES' 1976-1980 FIVE YEAR PLANS WILL PROBABLY BE DELAYED UP TO SEVERAL MONTHS TO PERMIT REVISIONS REFLECTING INCREASED INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION OF THE TWO ECONOMIES. IF FULLY IMPLEMENTED, THE AGREEMENT WILL SEE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, JORDAN DRAWING POWER FROM SYRIA'S TABQA DAM ON EUPHRATES BY 1980, A DIVISION OF OVERSEAS MARKETS FOR GOODS PRODUCED BY BOTH COUNTRIES (SUCH AS PHOSPHATES), JOINT GOVERNMENT TENDERS ON INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS, AND THE LOCATING OF NEW PLANTS ON ECONOMICALLY RATIONAL GROUNDS DISREGARDING THE POLITICAL FRONTIER. JORDANIAN EMBOFF CONCLUDED THAT "THE POLITICAL CLIMATE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS THE BEST IT HAS BEEN IN YEARS" AND HE HOPES THAT INCREASED ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND JORDAN WOULD BRING PEACE NEARER IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

4. COMMENT: THE DESIRE FOR IMPROVED "COORDINATION" IS THEME MOST COMMONLY SOUNDED IN DAMASCUS TO DESCRIBE MULTIPLE CONTACTS UNDER WAY BETWEEN THE TWO CAPITALS. HUSSEIN'S APRIL VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND ASAD'S RETURN VISIT IN JUNE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED UP BY ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCREASED MILITARY COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, VISITS EXCHANGED BY MINISTERS OF INFORMATION, A STAY HERE BY ROYAL ADVISORS TALHUNI AND ABD AL-MUNIM RIFA'I, BY EXCHANGE OF PRIME MINISTERS' VISITS AND BY SYRIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO AMMAN. SARG CLEARLY VIEWS THIS SPURT OF BILATERAL ACTIVITY AS DESIRABLE IN ITSELF. TAKEN TOGETHER WITH
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ASAD'S JANUARY VISIT TO LEBANON, KHADDAM'S WELL-PUBLICIZED MEDIATION EFFORTS IN BEIRUT, AND LEBANESE PRIMIN KARAMI'S RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS, THE SYRO-JORDANIAN RAPPROCHEMENT SHOULD ALSO BE SEEN AS PART OF ASAD'S WIDER DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO IMPROVE SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH ARAB NEIGHBORS BORDERING ISRAEL, ONE GOAL OF WHICH IS CERTAINLY TO REMIND SADAT ABOUT SYRIA'S IMPORTANCE IN ANY MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

5. SYRIANS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY UNCOMMUNICATIVE IN OUR
DISCUSSIONS ABOUT WHAT PROGRESS MAY OR MAY NOT BE BEING
MADE ON SYRO-JORDANIAN MILITARY COORDINATION. WE WILL
ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP FURTHER INFORMATION.

MURPHY

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